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Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The powerful Indian Ocean earthquake and the tsunami of 26 December 2004 and the outcomes of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction had far-reaching influences on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction during the past 12 months.

The tsunami triggered one of the most devastating disasters in living memory. There is widespread recognition that, if an early warning system for tsunamis had been in place in that region, many thousands of lives could have been saved.

The World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held at Kobe, Hyogo, Japan, adopted the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, which represent a landmark in universal understanding of disasters induced by natural hazards and reflect a solid commitment to implement a disaster reduction agenda. States, international and regional organizations and other stakeholders resolved to pursue a substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of countries and communities over the next 10 years. The Conference demonstrated that the world community urgently needs to join forces to break the vicious circle between poverty, environmental degradation and lack of preparation that turns natural hazards into disasters that destroy hard-won development gains. Numerous organizations of the United Nations system, regional bodies, Governments and civil society participate actively in the Strategy and its mechanisms to coordinate and guide disaster risk reduction and its integration into development planning and action.

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The present report provides an overview of the implementation of the Strategy and the follow-up to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 59/231. It summarizes the essential elements of the Hyogo Framework for Action and gives an account of the follow-up actions taken under the Strategy by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, the inter-agency secretariat of the Strategy, national and regional entities and international organizations. The report contains a section on disasters associated with natural hazards and vulnerability, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 59/233, to highlight the role of disaster risk reduction as an essential policy tool to reduce vulnerability and reach the goals set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. It also reports on the advancements of early warning systems following the Indian Ocean tsunami.

Several studies, independent evaluations and consultations on the capacities and functioning of the international mechanisms for disaster reduction have pointed to the need for substantial changes and strengthening of the Strategy system in order to better support the implementation of the Hyogo Framework and meet the needs of its many stakeholders. Proposed changes to achieve such strengthening are outlined in the report.

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I. World Conference on Disaster Reduction Follow-up to the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters

A. Introduction

1. In its resolution 58/214, the General Assembly decided to convene a World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005. That conference was held (a) to conclude a review of the 10-year-old Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and of the Strategy Plan of Action, with a view to updating the guiding framework on disaster reduction for the twenty-first century; (b) to identify specific actions aimed at ensuring the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation) in the areas of vulnerability, risk assessment and disaster management; (c) to share best practices and lessons learned to further disaster reduction; (d) to increase awareness of the importance of disaster reduction policies; and (e) to increase the reliability and availability of disaster-related information to the public and disaster management agencies in all regions. The Strategy secretariat was to serve as the secretariat of the Conference and to coordinate preparatory activities.

2. The General Assembly, in its resolution 59/231, reiterated its invitation to Member States, all United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and other relevant intergovernmental agencies and organizations, in particular the members of the Task Force, to participate actively in the Conference. It also requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly, at its sixtieth session, a report on the implementation of the resolution, and in particular on the outcome of that Conference.

3. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction, hosted by the Government of Japan, was held in Kobe, Hyogo, from 18 to 22 January 2005, just three weeks after a powerful earthquake and tsunami had engulfed the Indian Ocean region and had caused one of the most devastating disasters in living memory. According to the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters in Brussels, during the period May 2004-April 2005, disasters associated with natural hazards killed nearly 250,000 people worldwide and affected, mainly through injuries and material losses, some 157 million people, causing damage evaluated at some US$ 102 billion.

4. The Conference attracted worldwide attention and assumed an unprecedented level of significance with regard to disaster risk reduction. It brought together some 4,000 people from interested public and private entities from around the world, with participants from 168 States, 78 observer bodies, 161 non-governmental organizations and 562 journalists representing 152 media organizations. The Public Forum, which offered a platform for information exchange with the public, welcomed some 40,000 participants and hosted 66 workshops.

5. The Conference represented a landmark in worldwide understanding of and commitment to implementing a comprehensive disaster risk reduction agenda. It revealed the wealth of knowledge and practical abilities that exists in the area of

disaster risk reduction but which has not been made available in a consolidated manner or applied as effectively as it could have been. It also revealed the outstanding challenges to ensure that development sectors within the United Nations system, international financial institutions, national and local public administrations and the private sector adopt risk assessments and disaster-resilient development practices. Problematic issues related to the financing of such undertakings are frequently unresolved. Lessons learned from the tsunami-hit countries also revealed other weaknesses pointing to the need for increased educational and awareness programmes, early warning and institutional preparedness capacities.

6. In the course of the preparatory work and debates, the Conference helped shape the emergence of a new political will to translate words into action and to apply available human and technical resources to the search for solutions in disaster-prone countries and regions around the world. The Conference forcefully demonstrated that the tragedy in the Indian Ocean region had strengthened the determination of participants to reach tangible conclusions and to agree on a clearly defined action plan against which commitments and achievements could be measured in the future. That political will was expressed in the Conference outcomes (see A/CONF.206/6), the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, a Common statement of the Special Session on the Indian Ocean Disaster: risk reduction for a safer future and the Review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World.

B. Essential elements of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015

7. The Hyogo Framework provides a clear and authoritative framework for pursuing disaster risk reduction and builds on other relevant multilateral frameworks and declarations (see A/CONF.206/6, chap. I, resolution 2). The Framework constitutes an agreement that was developed through exhaustive negotiations between States, experts and collaborating organizations. It reflects their intention to take a holistic approach in identifying and putting into action complex multidisciplinary disaster risk reduction measures over the next 10 years. Most important, it gives new impetus to the strategies outlined in the Yokohama Strategy by setting out the collective and individual roles and responsibilities of groups of stakeholders in its implementation and follow-up.

8. Starting with the premise that the expected outcome should be a substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries, to be achieved over the next 10 years, the Hyogo Framework calls for the pursuit of the following three strategic goals:

(a) More effective integration of disaster risk considerations into sustainable development policies, planning and programming at all levels, with special emphasis on disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and vulnerability reduction;

(b) Development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities at all levels, in particular the community level, with a view to contributing systematically to building resilience to hazards;

(c) Systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the design and implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programmes for the post-disaster reconstruction of affected communities.

9. In addition, the Conference adopted the following five priorities for future action, with a set of key activities:

(a) Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation;

(b) Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning;

(c) Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels;

(d) Reduce the underlying risk factors;

(e) Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

10. The Hyogo Framework emphasizes that the primary responsibility for implementation and follow-up lies with States, involving national public administration structures, the scientific community and civil society. States are called upon to build a strong sense of ownership in the area of disaster risk reduction within their populations and support of local Governments capacities. Most important, States should also conceive mechanisms that allow bottom-up disaster risk reduction initiatives, originating at the community level and contributing to the shaping of disaster risk reduction policy and programmes at the national level.

11. The roles of regional institutions and organizations include transnational responsibilities, since disasters and risk are not bound by national borders. In that context, the Hyogo Framework specifically notes the need for developing regional initiatives and the risk reduction capacities of regional mechanisms.

12. International organizations, including those of the United Nations system and international financial institutions, are called upon to integrate the goals of the Hyogo Framework into their own strategies, making use of existing coordination mechanisms such as the United Nations Development Group and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, as well as the resident coordinator system and United Nations country teams. They should assist disaster-prone developing countries in their efforts to increase institutional and technical capacities to address the priorities set out in the Hyogo Framework.

13. The Strategy system, through the Task Force, platforms and the secretariat, in collaboration with agencies and experts, is to provide support to this process, specifically to assist in facilitating and coordinating action among stakeholders. The Strategy system also has a decisive role in furthering advocacy and resource mobilization and information-sharing and reporting.

C. Follow-up action by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system

14. Following the Conference, as a first step in the follow-up process, the secretariat conducted a broad-based consultation with the Strategy stakeholders and Task Force members, and presented to the Task Force, at its eleventh session in May 2005, a set of strategic directions to assist in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework. The Task Force reworked and adopted those directions and requested that guiding principles be specifically brought to the attention of States, national platforms and the constituencies of the Task Force members to support them in setting their implementation policy parameters as follows:

(a) The Hyogo Framework is the cornerstone of the Strategy. The task of the Strategy system in the coming years will be to implement the Hyogo Framework;

(b) National and local implementation of the Hyogo Framework is the essential goal for the Strategy system. All key actors (national and local Governments, civil society, regional and international organizations) should join forces towards that goal;

(c) Disaster risk reduction is an integral part of sustainable development and one of the essential prerequisites for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;

(d) Disaster risk reduction diminishes the need for humanitarian emergency interventions in the aftermath of disasters;

(e) Investment in disaster risk reduction thus enhances sustainable development and enables humanitarian assistance capacity to be applied more effectively;

(f) The Hyogo Framework calls for concerted and well-sequenced actions. Key priorities and actions will therefore have to be selected for local, national, regional and global levels.

15. In the implementation of the Hyogo Framework, a particularly crucial role is assigned to the national-level stakeholders. In countries with established coordination mechanisms or systems assisted by the United Nations system, the support of resident/humanitarian coordinators and United Nations country teams is called for to help design disaster risk reduction measures with a sense of urgency. To ensure the sustained effective implementation of such measures, it is important that disaster risk reduction initiatives build on the development needs and initiatives generated at the local level.

16. With the adoption of the strategic directions, the Strategy system is called upon to focus on the following areas:

(a) Institutional commitments: support for national action plans and priorities, including national platforms for disaster risk reduction; facilitation of a matrix of commitments and initiatives of the Strategy system, outlining responsibilities, resources and action programmes to enable participating organizations to set up collaborative arrangements and multi-stakeholder partnerships; and facilitation of regional initiatives;

(b) Planning and programming: development of planning and programming tools for use as disaster risk reduction instruments, to be included in common country assessments (CCAs), United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and poverty reduction strategy papers; preparation of planning guidance tools for priority action at national and community levels in individual sectors such as public administration, urban management, environment, health, education, water, agriculture and telecommunications;

(c) Awareness and advocacy: formulation of awareness and advocacy strategies for specific general and local uses; preparation of annual awareness campaigns for the International Day for Disaster Reduction; training tools and organization of inter-agency workshops;

(d) Reporting on progress and monitoring: identification of appropriately adapted sets of benchmarks and generic indicators to measure progress in reaching the goals and priorities of the Hyogo Framework at global, national and local levels; incorporation of disaster risk reduction parameters into existing United Nations and intergovernmental reporting requirements related to the Millennium Development Goals, sustainable development and climate change adaptation; and nomination of lead agencies for effective guidance and reporting, as reflected in the matrix-based description of commitments and initiatives.

D. International commitments

17. The Task Force decided at its eleventh session that a matrix should be prepared, showing commitments and initiatives in support of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework. That matrix is currently being developed, coordinated by the secretariat, to be circulated later in 2005. It will identify the task managers drawn from specialized agencies, funds and programmes, technical networks and regional organizations, taking responsibility on behalf of their international organizations (governmental and non-governmental) for follow-up and support to the five priority areas of the Hyogo Framework. Detailed information on strategic commitments and distribution of tasks will be compiled by the secretariat, with updates being supplied through the website www.unisdr.org. Specific actions by stakeholders and United Nations agencies will be described in periodic progress reports, consolidated and disseminated by the secretariat, according to the five priority areas. A set of tentative benchmarks, guidelines and generic indicators that can be adapted to national environments is being developed, facilitated by the Strategy secretariat and the involvement of Task Force members and national experts.

18. Many United Nations agencies and programmes, as well as other international and regional organizations and bodies, have initiated national and regional follow-up to the provisions of the Hyogo Framework. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is reviewing its potential role in the area of preparedness for effective response, while the Strategy secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have initiated plans with the United Nations Development Group Office with a view to supporting United Nations country teams. Some organizations, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), have reoriented their planning processes by redirecting the allocation of resources to ensure that their activities are

aligned with the parameters set by the Hyogo Framework. Specifically, the 57th WMO Executive Council approved an organization-wide coordination framework and a detailed implementation plan for the multihazard approach of the organization to disaster reduction, led by its Natural Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Programme. WMO has engaged in strategic partnerships with key agencies to ensure that warnings issued by national meteorological and hydrological services be used more effectively for preparedness and emergency response at the international level through to the local level. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group proposed an action plan in March 2005 to develop technical standards in support of telecommunications for disaster preparedness and early warning.

19. Thematic platforms and networks will be engaged or, where necessary, specifically developed to assist in the implementation of distinct components of the Hyogo Framework. These include the Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning, currently operated by the Strategy secretariat, and the International Recovery Platform, recently launched in Kobe by the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, the Government of Japan, the International Labour Organization, the Strategy secretariat, UNDP and the World Bank. The purpose of the Platform, to be operated by UNDP, is to develop a mechanism to integrate systematically risk reduction into post-disaster recovery efforts and to benefit from lessons learned. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme have also committed staff time and resources to support the Platform. In a related area, UNDP, together with the German Technical Cooperation, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the ProVention Consortium, UNEP, UNV and the World Bank, is developing a system-wide post-disaster needs assessment methodology to support in-country recovery planning frameworks. UNEP is working on post-disaster assessments of environmental impacts, with a view to incorporating environmental concerns into the design of processes of recovery and restoration. Other platforms essentially focusing on information sharing and knowledge management, the strengthening of institutions, training and environmental risk management are being discussed under the aegis of the Strategy.

E. National and regional developments and initiatives

20. The emphasis of the Hyogo Framework on the national dimension in its implementation and follow-up, with the primary responsibility of States, requires, as a corollary, the development of strong participatory and collaborative ties with civil society and national and local authorities with the national development sectors, the national disaster management systems and scientific and technical support organizations. The Hyogo Framework specifically calls for the establishment or strengthening of national platforms for disaster risk reduction, anchored to existing national systems, to review, coordinate, guide and support the national commitments.

21. The pursuit of that national ownership requirement has already stimulated tangible follow-up. National workshops for disaster risk reduction in countries including China, Costa Rica, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Peru, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam and Yemen have been held or are being planned with a multisectoral approach to determine national priorities in implementing the Hyogo Framework. National

platforms have also facilitated coordination across sectors at national and regional levels to promote disaster risk reduction awareness. Initiatives are under way in Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chad, China, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Madagascar, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Senegal, Seychelles, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda to review national disaster risk reduction plans and to strengthen or create national platforms in support of broader national policy initiatives and the development of sustainable institutional systems to deal with disaster risk. As an example, Bangladesh published its *Corporate Plan 2005-2009: A Framework for Action*, which lays out a national vision to "reduce the vulnerability of the people, especially the poor, to the effects of natural, environmental and human induced hazards". The Plan defines goals and key result areas, drawing from global agendas and national inputs, including the Strategy and its Hyogo Framework, the Millennium Development Goals, the World Summit for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, poverty reduction strategy papers and UNDAFs. Following the Conference, the Islamic Republic of Iran established a secretariat within its Natural Disaster Research Institute to help implement the Hyogo Framework. The secretariat is constituted of representatives of relevant ministries and institutions, which are in the process of preparing a 10-year plan of action to achieve disaster risk reduction. India set up its national disaster management authority to strengthen the national and institutional legislative system to deal with disaster risk reduction.

22. Interactions and collaboration among national platforms are increasing through multilateral and bilateral meetings, assisted by the Strategy secretariat and Task Force members. For example, with the regional unit of the Strategy secretariat acting as a facilitator and the African Union Commission as a host, a forum of national platform focal points of African countries was launched within the context of the Africa Regional Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction. The forum agreed to meet regularly at the regional level to share information and experiences with the principal objective of monitoring and influencing national implementation of the Hyogo Framework. Similarly, national platforms in Europe (Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Spain and Sweden) have developed a self-organized process of networking.

Regional

23. While the impetus may vary from one region to another, as reiterated during the regional sessions held at the Conference, regional and subregional organizations continue to play a crucial role in the implementation of the Strategy. The Task Force requested the secretariat at its eleventh session[1] to prepare a review of regional and subregional strategies for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework and progress in the strengthening of the regional outreach of the Strategy system, as a means to help foster and strengthen cooperation on disaster reduction among existing regional stakeholders, cross-fertilize their activities and promote regional partnerships.

24. The regional nature of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster, both in its impact across the whole Indian Ocean rim and in the response, is a further reminder of the importance of regional approaches in disaster risk reduction. A coordination mechanism[2] under the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission has been put in place to facilitate regional capacities for the detection of potential tsunamigenic events and to issue warnings. Regional institutions[3] are contributing to the establishment of a tsunami early warning system for the region. The common

statement adopted at the Conference requested the Strategy secretariat to report on regional mechanisms for disaster reduction to the General Assembly (see A/CONF.206/6, annex II).

25. In order to better support stakeholders at national and regional levels, the Strategy secretariat is currently strengthening its regional outreach capacities in close collaboration with UNDP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and regional organizations. In addition to the existing outreach units for Africa (Nairobi-based, hosted by UNEP) and Latin America and the Caribbean (San José and Panama, hosted by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)/WHO), Strategy units have been developed for Asia since May 2005 (based in Bangkok, hosted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), with a staff member in Central Asia since 2004 (based in Dushanbe, hosted by UNDP). Those units work in close coordination with the regional advisers for disaster reduction of the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs regional disaster response advisers. In support of this, UNDP will deploy national disaster risk reduction advisers to assist national efforts in capacity-building for disaster risk reduction in 20 of the most disaster-prone countries of the world.

26. Previous reports of the Secretary-General (A/59/228, A/58/277) have outlined regional political commitments made towards disaster risk reduction. Numerous regional consultations are supporting regional efforts to implement the Hyogo Framework, as detailed below. It is particularly encouraging to see initiatives in regions previously less active in the area of disaster risk reduction.

27. The United Nations is reviewing current progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, in which the issue of disaster risk is recognized as an important area of focus in coming years. Similarly, the follow-up to the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States includes the issues of disaster risk reduction and the Hyogo Framework. A key challenge and a priority of the Strategy secretariat is to facilitate coherence between those processes and ensure that they are mutually reinforcing.

Africa

28. African Governments have been particularly responsive to the Hyogo Framework, building on ongoing commitments to disaster reduction. The African Union (AU) Commission and its New Partnership for Africa's Development secretariat, working under the umbrella of the Africa Working Group of the Task Force and assisted by the Strategy secretariat regional unit, UNDP, the African Development Bank and other partners, facilitated country-level consultations to develop an African regional strategy for disaster risk reduction. That strategy was adopted by the AU and the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and acknowledged by the Assembly of the African Union in 2004. To strengthen that process following the Conference, an intergovernmental advisory group[4] was established to help mobilize higher levels of political commitment and link national needs and concerns with United Nations assistance in disaster risk reduction.

29. Levels of commitment and progress at the subregional level require further strengthening. New developments include partnerships in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to promote disaster risk reduction and to design subregional common policies on disaster risk reduction.

Asia and the Pacific

30. In Asia, Governments are building greater commitments to disaster risk reduction through several mechanisms. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Committee on Disaster Management is working with national authorities to facilitate coordination among its Member States in managing regional cooperation in disaster management and emergency response. It proposed a regional agreement on such collaboration to its members for ratification.

31. Pacific countries are developing, with the support of the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, a strategy for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework in their region. The guiding principles of the strategy address specific gaps and challenges identified by Pacific Island communities through the Commission Pacific Islands Regional Progress Report (1994-2004) and the pacific regional position paper prepared for the Conference.

32. ESCAP contributes, through its 52 members and associate members, to the mainstreaming of disaster reduction into sustainable development, with particular focus on water-related disasters, especially floods and drought. The Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, based in Bangkok, is working through the Consultative Committee on Regional Cooperation in Disaster Management on mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into the social and economic development efforts of the Governments of the region. The Committee comprises heads of national disaster management authorities from 24 countries in Asia. The Asian Disaster Reduction Centre is a specialized organization for disaster reduction based in Kobe, Japan. Composed of 23 member countries and four additional advisory countries, the Centre relates to focal points in participating Governments and facilitates the exchange of information and training. Its next annual conference, to be held in Seoul in March 2006, will address issues related to the institutional basis for disaster risk reduction, recovery and risk communication, in response to the Hyogo Framework.

33. To maximize the respective strategic advantages of each organization in planning and implementing concrete initiatives for the benefit of Asian communities and countries, the open-ended International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Asia Partnership for disaster reduction was established jointly by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, UNDP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, ESCAP and the Strategy secretariat.

34. In Central Asia, the Strategy secretariat, with several agencies, including UNDP and the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, facilitated consultative meetings to bring together Government representatives, international organizations and donor agencies to enhance information exchange and cooperation. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are now in the process of establishing national strategies in the region for the coming 10 years.

35. The Chinese Government will be hosting a high-level Asian conference on disaster reduction in Beijing in September 2005 to take stock of progress and seek to raise the commitment in the region to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework. China offered to host an international centre for collaboration on drought-related issues in the region. Similarly, the hosting of a centre for collaboration on seismic risk issues is planned by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

36. Regional networks of NGOs in support of disaster reduction have become more active in the preparation of and follow-up to the Conference. The Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network (see www.adrrn.net) was formed in 2002 to support NGO activities and promote cooperation. UNV is developing a regional initiative for capacity-building of national and local volunteer resources and NGOs, with a view to increasing community preparedness for disasters in South Asia. UNV is also strengthening the regional South-South cooperation modality for exchanging United Nations Volunteers with disaster risk management expertise for initial response to disasters and recovery.

Latin America and the Caribbean

37. The Organization of American States (OAS) called, at the most recent session of its General Assembly, for a joint consultative body of the Permanent Council on Hemispheric Security and the Inter-American Council for Integral Development/Permanent Executive Committee to work on the immediate implementation of risk management recommendations, review existing OAS structures and propose a single Inter-American committee to address all aspects of disaster management. It will convene a hemispheric meeting on the costs and benefits of investing in disaster risk reduction and will bring forward recommendations to the OAS Permanent Council to urge member States to establish short time frames for the implementation of the recommendations of the Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response, and to work in close collaboration with the Strategy secretariat, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, IFRC and other relevant partners. Natural hazard risk reduction is one of three agenda items of the upcoming First Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Officials on Sustainable Development in 2005.

38. Cuba hosted a meeting organized by the Association of Caribbean States, the United Nations system (UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), IFRC and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Management Agency, in cooperation with the Strategy secretariat.[5] In support of the Hyogo Framework, it promoted cross-cultural networks for disaster risk reduction to facilitate collaboration and exchange of disaster risk reduction lessons and good practices among English-, Spanish-, Dutch- and French-speaking countries and territories, building on the network developed by UNDP as part of the Caribbean Risk Management Initiative.

39. Other regional activities contribute to the priorities set out in the Hyogo Framework. In response to the December 2004 tsunami, the Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America convened a meeting for representatives from different sectors to discuss a regional strategy for implementing a Central American tsunami early warning system, and to secure resources for updating the Central America regional disaster reduction plan

(2006-2015). PAHO/WHO has been assisting countries in implementing the Hyogo Framework recommendations for ensuring safer hospitals by 2015. Practical guidelines for making hospitals safe will be produced by the end of 2005. Several countries found it practical to use disaster resistant hospitals as an example of a benchmark for reducing overall disaster risk. Andean countries have integrated the Hyogo Framework in the implementation of the Andean strategy approved by Heads of States in July 2004.

Europe

40. Triggered by the December 2004 tsunami, the European Commission issued a communication to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions,[6] in which the Commission recognized the broad range of policies and financing instruments at its disposal that can contribute to disaster risk reduction. The Commission is conscious of the need for a more coherent European approach and sees the Hyogo Framework as the appropriate starting point.

41. The European Commission and the Africa-Caribbean-Pacific States (ACP) secretariat established an ACP-European Union (EU) Natural Disaster Facility to support ACP countries in building up resilience to disasters, as called for by the Hyogo Framework. That initiative has recently been endorsed by the EU and is expected to start its activities in the near future in collaboration with the Strategy secretariat and other partners.

II. Disasters associated with natural hazards and vulnerability: a development challenge

42. General Assembly resolution 59/233 calls for assistance to countries to reduce their vulnerability to disasters, which constitutes an essential requirement for their development. The Hyogo Framework acknowledges that "Disaster risk reduction is a cross-cutting issue in the context of sustainable development and therefore an important element for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration" (see A/CONF.206/6, chap. I, resolution 2). Countries from sub-Saharan Africa were identified as those least likely to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.[7] Those countries are also some of the most vulnerable to disasters.

43. Much work remains in order to change the development paradigm to seriously assess and reduce disaster risk. The Atlantic hurricane season in 2004 and its early start in 2005 caused significant loss of life and damage to property in the Caribbean, where the most vulnerable were the hardest hit. Severe to moderate droughts in mid-2005 affected Austria, the Balkan countries, France, Hungary, Italy, Portugal and Spain, leading to important agricultural losses. Earlier in 2005, landslides and an earthquake in Indonesia, avalanches in India, floods in Pakistan and Ethiopia, and an earthquake in the Islamic Republic of Iran left devastation in their wake. Currently two thirds of all disasters are climate- or weather-related and the trend of increase in their number outnumber other hazards. According to the World Meteorological Organization, 2004 was the fourth hottest year since 1861, bringing heat waves, drought and an above-average number of hurricanes and deadly typhoons to some regions of the world, while others experienced disastrous floods

and mudslides produced by above-average precipitation. According to a recent study by Columbia University and the World Bank, between 85 and 95 per cent of the population and GDP located in disaster risk hotspots globally are at risk due to climate-related hazards.

44. Some progress is being made towards overcoming vulnerability to natural hazards by integrating disaster reduction measures into development strategies. Those efforts involve linking climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, as well as ensuring that implementation of the Millennium Development Goals supports disaster risk reduction. Global initiatives are supporting the development of tools and guidelines to facilitate the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development planning frameworks. That constitutes an important leap forward in supporting the implementation of the Hyogo Framework. UNDP has initiated a global project in support of those objectives, using as a vehicle country cooperation frameworks, multi-year funding frameworks and country programmes. Guidelines for CCA/UNDAF on disaster risk reduction are being developed by UNDP and the Strategy secretariat with the International Labour Organization, WHO and others within the United Nations Development Group. Several countries, including Bangladesh, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mauritius and Uganda, have incorporated disaster risk reduction measures into their CCAs and UNDAFs, elaborated with the assistance of United Nations country teams. The ProVention Consortium is developing a set of disaster risk reduction mainstreaming tools, addressing the process of poverty reduction strategy papers, budgetary support and country strategy papers.

45. In the ongoing effort to develop generic indicators for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework, a parallel discussion is being promoted by the Strategy secretariat on revised indicators for the Millennium Development Goals to measure disaster resilience in progress towards reducing poverty and hunger, the provision of water, sanitation, security for slum dwellers and environmental sustainability. For instance, it is critical to measure whether the reduction of poverty, hunger and insecurity of tenure for slum-dwellers through Millennium Development Goal efforts is lost in years of drought, floods or earthquakes; i.e., it must be ensured that development gains are not undone by disaster losses. Interventions to increase agricultural productivity to reduce poverty and hunger through greater extraction of water must be balanced with water conservation measures.

Integrating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction

46. The technical and institutional links between adaptation to climate change and disaster risk reduction are under increasing discussion. The eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Buenos Aires in December 2004, recognized the issue. Some countries advocate for the involvement of the disaster reduction community in the Convention Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice. Similarly, the inclusion of climate change as an underlying risk factor for disasters was greatly debated at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction. The Hyogo Framework includes the following priority action: "Promote the integration of risk reduction associated with existing climate variability and future climate change into strategies for the reduction of disaster risk and adaptation to climate change, which would include the clear identification of climate-related disaster risks, the design of specific risk reduction measures and an improved and routine use of climate risk

information by planners, engineers and other decision-makers" (see A/CONF.206/6, chap. I, resolution 2). In addition, with regard to resource mobilization, States agreed to "mainstream disaster risk reduction measures appropriately into multilateral and bilateral development assistance programmes, including those related to poverty reduction, natural resource management, urban development and adaptation to climate change" (see A/CONF.206/6, chap. I, resolution 2).

47. The Task Force created the Working Group on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, co-chaired by UNDP and WMO, to focus on the promotion of an integrated approach to climate risk. The Working Group assisted the Vulnerability and Adaptation Resource Group, an informal group of resource stakeholders, in the development of a discussion paper entitled "Disaster risk management in a changing climate", presented at the Conference, for use in promoting climate risk management issues in development agencies. Other Working Group activities include collaboration with the Least Developed Countries Expert Group of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to assist the poorest developing countries in accessing disaster reduction best practices for adaptation to climate change. In the context of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNDP has initiated a programme for integrated risk management and climate change adaptation for a growing portfolio of projects. WMO has strengthened its capacity to assist countries in managing climate-related risks, improving historical climate records, capacity-building and training. Several WMO departments also contribute to the enhancement of regional climate outlook forum networks that strengthen capacity to anticipate and manage climate variability and change in sensitive regions and sectors. The Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre second International Work Conference on Climate Change and Disaster Reduction brought together country practitioners and experts from the two fields to advance collaboration.

III. Global development of early warning systems following the 26 December 2004 tsunami

48. Good progress is being made in developing an early warning system for tsunamis in the Indian Ocean region. This follows widespread recognition that, if such a system had been in place prior to the tragedy of December 2004, many thousands of lives could have been saved. The countries of the region are working to establish national tsunami warning centres and have agreed on the principles of a multilateral mechanism for strengthening regional ocean observing systems and exchanging data and warning information under the leadership of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission. An interim tsunami advisory system has been put in place and WMO is taking steps to upgrade the necessary telecommunications capabilities. Multi-agency assessment missions led by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission are under way to identify country needs for technical assistance. Three familiarization study tours on tsunamis have been organized by the Strategy, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre for national high-level administrators of the region, and joint training for technical personnel and television broadcasters has been undertaken. Further activities are planned, including technical training and public awareness activities, to help develop the capacities of communities to understand their tsunami risks and to effectively respond to warnings, and the development of lessons learned and good practice information.

49. Those activities have been supported by a multipartner project coordinated by the Strategy secretariat through its platform for the promotion of early warning and funded through the United Nations flash appeal for the affected countries. The project provides an integrated framework for strengthening early warning systems in the region, recognizing the need to develop the tsunami early warning system within the context of multiple hazards, disaster management capacities and risk reduction. The project donors include the European Commission, Finland, Germany, Japan, Norway and Sweden. While efforts to date are putting the essential groundwork in place, it should be recognized that substantial additional effort and resources are still required to establish a fully fledged early warning system, with a sound technical footing, to be integrated, with effective public engagement, into disaster management and response systems for all hazards. It is important to note that several other ocean basins, such as the Caribbean basin and the Mediterranean basin, are also at high risk to tsunamis and need improved early warning capacities.

50. The Hyogo Framework sets out specific priorities for action on early warning for all hazards and on associated risk assessment and preparedness. In the report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005), the Secretary-General proposed that the United Nations system should take a leadership role in developing comprehensive global capacities for systematic, people-centred early warning systems covering all hazards and all countries and communities. To that end, he requested the Strategy secretariat to coordinate a global survey of early warning system capacities and gaps, in cooperation with other relevant organizations, with a view to identifying priority steps needed to achieve such a comprehensive capacity. The survey is expected to be available in early 2006.

51. A number of important related initiatives have been pursued, including the launching of the International Early Warning Programme by United Nations partners at the Conference as a vehicle to stimulate cooperation and advances in early warning systems, the establishment of the multilateral Global Earth Observation System of Systems initiative, hosted by WMO, whose data underpin early warning and disaster reduction, and the statement of strong support that the G-8 leaders voiced this year at Gleneagles, Scotland, with regard to disaster risk reduction, the Strategy and the development of early warning as a means to reduce disaster risks. Under the auspices of the United Nations, Germany is organizing, to hold in March 2006, a timely third International Conference on Early Warning. The conference will, among other things, seek to stimulate and showcase concrete projects to build early warning systems for vulnerable countries.

IV. Enabling the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system to effectively support the implementation of the Hyogo Framework

52. The successful and coherent implementation of the Hyogo Framework requires the strengthening of the capacity of the Strategy system to provide a solid basis for action, and clear roles and responsibilities among the various stakeholders. Increased commitment and engagement by Governments, United Nations agencies, regional entities and civil society organizations, and systematic tracking of disaster reduction investments are required. The consequences of the recent tsunami tragedy also demonstrated that such strengthening has become an urgent issue.

53. A number of studies, evaluations and consultations[8] on the functioning of the Strategy mechanisms, its current capacities and potentials and the capacities and value-added of the United Nations system to deal with disaster risk issues provided the basis for the formulation of new proposals for future functions and the development of the Strategy. They have built on the reports of the Secretary-General (A/54/497; A/54/136-E/1999/89) and General Assembly resolution 54/219 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/63.

54. The main elements of the proposed strengthened system are:

(a) Overall responsibility for the Strategy within the United Nations would remain with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, with a permanent vice-chair representing the United Nations Development Group, supported by a management oversight board;

(b) An expanded and reformed Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction (for current membership, see www.unisdr.org) that would serve as a global forum on disaster risk reduction and advise on and commit to supporting the implementation of the Hyogo Framework. Its membership would include Governments and United Nations agencies, regional organizations and civil society, and it would be renamed the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. A subsidiary programme advisory committee would review and coordinate the work programmes of the global platform and its associated entities;

(c) A strengthened Strategy secretariat would have the following core functions:

- Tracking the overall implementation of the Hyogo Framework, facilitating reviews of experience and preparing progress reports
- Promoting a worldwide culture of risk reduction, acting as a "clearing house" for information and communication materials, advocated with broad inter-agency collaboration and networks of expertise
- Facilitating and servicing the successor to the Task Force, the management oversight board and regional and thematic platforms and networks, encouraging policy development and reviews, and supporting cooperation among members
- Supporting national platforms for disaster risk reduction with information and policy advice, acting as a broker for the provision of technical expertise and resources to national and thematic programmes
- Serving as the focal point within the United Nations system for the coordination and harmonization of policies and strategies for disaster risk reduction, encouraging synergy between the humanitarian and socio-economic development policies and strategies of the United Nations system
- Advocating resource mobilization, establishing tracking and reporting systems, administering the Strategy Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction

(d) The secretariat would remain a distinct entity within the Secretariat, with accountability to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs;

(e) Active regional networks to strengthen advocacy for disaster risk reduction and cooperation at regional and subregional levels in support to national initiatives and platforms;

(f) Thematic platforms or networks of expertise in support of specific topics identified in the Hyogo Framework based on needs and time-limited tasks;

(g) National platforms for disaster risk reduction, as designated by States, would have responsibility, as national forums, for coordination of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework, supported by regional and subregional platforms and networks for disaster reduction and United Nations country teams, where present.

55. The intention of Governments to maintain the informal Strategy Support Group is welcomed. It is a vehicle for strengthening the financing of and support to disaster risk reduction globally.

56. The objective of the proposed arrangements is strengthened management and accountability. The management oversight board, to be chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and the programme advisory committee would provide a stronger strategic and programmatic leadership for the Strategy system, especially through its focus on supporting Member States. The resulting framework of policy and direction would provide a clearer basis for the secretariat and the Strategy stakeholders to implement the Hyogo Framework.

57. The proposed modification of the organizational and management structure of the Strategy system is to be discussed at a Strategy stakeholder workshop in early October 2005 and submitted to the Task Force at its twelfth session in November 2005 with a view to beginning operation in January 2006.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

58. **The Secretary-General calls upon the Assembly to endorse the Hyogo Declaration and Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, and to invite States, civil society organizations, regional bodies and international organizations, including the United Nations system and international financing institutions, to comply with the request for implementation, follow-up and support, as set out in section IV of the Hyogo Framework.**

59. **In order to ensure international coordination, coherence and monitoring of progress in implementing disaster risk reduction at all levels, the Secretary-General recommends that the Assembly endorse the proposed strengthening of the Strategy system, its governance, secretariat and the distribution of roles and responsibilities among agencies in support of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework. That would include the establishment of a management oversight board to advise and support the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, a modified task force reformed into a global platform for disaster reduction, with a subsidiary programme advisory committee, and a strengthened Strategy secretariat to service the system at all levels, according to the proposal described in paragraph 54.**

60. **Recent experiences in sudden-onset and other disasters, including the Indian Ocean tsunami, have underscored the critical importance of disaster risk reduction. The Hyogo Framework has clearly highlighted the critical role of the United Nations in providing leadership and support in implementing an effective disaster reduction strategy. The Strategy Secretariat must therefore be strengthened and provided with secure and predictable funding. In this connection, it is recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 54/219, stated that the Strategy should be funded exclusively from extrabudgetary resources. In the absence of regular budget funding to ensure a sound financial base, the Secretary-General would therefore urge Member States to demonstrate their commitment to fully supporting the work of the Strategy secretariat by contributing to the Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction.**

61. **Based on recommendations of the Task Force, the common statement issued at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, the evaluation and experience gained by the Strategy secretariat, and the sixth High-Level Meeting with Regional and Other Organizations, the Secretary-General recommends the strengthening of regional mechanisms for collaboration and networking in support of national and local efforts to reduce disaster risk.**

62. **The Secretary-General reiterates the need to develop global capacities for systematic people-centred early warning systems, covering all hazards and all countries and communities at risk. They should make use of existing capabilities and be well integrated into disaster reduction and disaster management policies and plans. The Strategy system and its international early warning programme provide a means to stimulate the necessary integration of early warning endeavours across multiple hazards and across the many stakeholders involved. The Secretary-General encourages Governments and organizations to maintain their support for the development of the tsunami early warning system and other necessary early warning systems, such as those for tropical cyclones and adverse weather in the Indian Ocean and other risk-prone regions.**

63. **Sustainable disaster risk reduction needs to become an integral component of environmental, economic and social development. The Strategy system therefore needs to attach high priority to the strengthening of partnerships with intergovernmental organizations and international financial institutions. The Strategy system should develop collaboration with entities responsible for disaster preparedness and response, including military forces and national rescue services.**

64. **As the United Nations reform moves forward to bring closer together, and provide coherence to, all United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, there is need for greater political commitment for the systematic integration of risk reduction into development plans and increased provision of resources and application of knowledge of disaster reduction by Member States, their communities and the wider international community. We must be able to report by 2015 a substantial decrease in the number of victims and affected communities due to their ability to manage and reduce risk to natural hazards. It is as much an economic imperative as it is a moral one.**

Notes

[1] Eleventh session of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, 24-26 May 2005, Geneva.

[2] The IOC Assembly, during its twenty-third session, adopted resolution XXIII-12 establishing an Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System.

[3] Including ESCAP, ASEAN, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center and the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre.

[4] Africa Advisory Group, with Government representatives from Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda, as well as an AU representative.

[5] Seminar workshop for national authorities on the theme "Risk management policies, systems and experiences in the Caribbean", Havana, 1-3 June 2005.

[6] "Reinforcing EU disaster and crisis response in third countries", Brussels, 20 April 2005.

[7] See Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals (1995).

[8] Randolph Kent, "Looking to the future: practical steps to strengthen the United Nations relevance and value added in disaster risk management"; Ian Christoplos, with Alexandra Galperin and Yasemin Aysan, "External evaluation of the Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction", report of the eleventh session of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, Geneva, 24-26 May 2005; and Mukesh Kapila, "Note on future organizational arrangements for the ISDR System".